/139 cont./

122 six of them with four shots. The animals flew up after each
[136] shot and came down again a few steps away, without taking
any notice of the approaching hunters. This fearlessness of
● [223] the animals, which is in direct contrast to the timidity of the
human beings, is probably to be explained by the fact that the
Jakuten /Yakut/ /140/ do not regard it as worth the trouble to
squander precious powder on bird game.

Our longing for some change of scenery was finally satisfied on August 29, in that the river, over half a verst wide, made two bends, which in a few hours of travel twice brought
[114] us around almost three-quarters of the wind rose. The topographer who had accompanied us the previous year would have been greatly enchanted by these topographical beauties (he feared that his colleagues in Irkutsk would scarcely believe that the Tunguska made such great bends), but we were certainly not, for the attainment of our journey's end was seriously endangered by these caprices of nature.

/141/ Seventh Chapter

100 The Jakuten /Yákut/ become more amiable. -- The iron Jegór and his statements. -- Bad weather. -- Northern vegetation. -- Falcon hunt. -- Unreliability of the Jakut statements. -- Beyond the 70th degree of latitude. -- Onset of winter. -- Icebound. -- Concerning the winter quarters. -- Message to Bulún. -- Internal affairs of our household. -- The fauna of the Siberian north. -- Freezing of the river. -- The local reindeer. -- Further travel on foot. -- Help in need. -- The Chatýgin family. -- Sachár O'ssipowitsch Rjeschétnikow. -- A Jakut balagan.

122 On August 30, not far from the little river of Ssukána, we
123 again came in sight of a human habitation and, to be sure, one still inhabited now, as we could see by the reindeer grazing in the vicinity -- we passed old. dilapidated huts several times a day. The call of our Tungus was soon answered. First a man and then a woman came down to the

/183 cont./

226 on it was presented to us, caught both by our men and by the natives. Perhaps it is the fish found in the lakes of the Jenisseí /Yenisei/ tundra and called mutschugór there (actually, we once heard it called that on the Olenék), which the academician Schmidt mentions from hearsay and which is very highly prized there. It has pale pink, almost white flesh, is very fat, and is barely two feet long. Along the Lena the Russians call it tschir, but it is hardly identical with the Jenessei fish of this name.

[439] Fish do not represent a trade article here, but are caught by the natives only for their needs. Fishing is said to have been
262 not particularly productive this year, but no shortage was to be seen. Our two Tungus, with the abundant fat fish set before them in every possible form, even forgot their native crucian, for which they had longed during the whole trip, and even the unheard-of happened when old Golé refused an evening meal because he could not eat any more. Raw fish in particular, frozen hard, cut in chips, and taken without any condiments, usually even without salt, is a favorite dish, which, incidentally, in Irkutsk, where it is known by the name struganína, has its devoted admirers even in higher society. I myself could not acquire a taste for it.

136 Apart from fish, however, the coast here is very unproductive. No one was able to tell us anything at all about larger sea animals. /184/ A seal was supposed to have been killed some time ago as a rarity. Polar bears do not seem to be common either and are not hunted by the natives, who rather have a great respect for
223 them. In summer there is a surplus of water birds, which are captured in great numbers, especially during the molting season. We were also told of such, about the size of a small goose, that come, not from the south, but from the north, from the sea. Since something similar is reported by almost all the travelers who have visited the Siberian shores of the Arctic Ocean, the fact
224 cannot be doubted. Wild reindeer are present in abundance -- we saw a large herd on our trip through the tundra -- and are killed in various ways, but especially with springtraps. Many hares are found in the immediate vicinity of the ocean. The arctic fox, however, constitutes the real wealth of the natives here. It is very common on the tundra and is predominantly

/189 cont./

122 here in Ssiktjách. Besides potatoes she also raises turnips, radishes,
123 and cabbage, but the latter no longer sets heads. In Preobrashén-
241 skoje /Preobrazhenskoye/, the last place on the Tunguska where vegetables are grown, Mrs. Akúlow also complained about this. Preobrashénskoje, however, lies at the 60th degree of latitude, Ssiktjách at the 70th. The Ssiktjách potatoes were not at all inferior to those of Preobrashénskoje and were considerably larger than those from Turuchansk /Turukhansk/ that we had obtained the previous year, which may be due in part to the variety, for in Turuchansk we found round potatoes, in Ssiktjach longish ones,
● [223] up to two inches long. Mrs. Rjeschétnikow also keeps some chickens, but complained that she gets only a few eggs from them; in part this may be due to the way the poor animals live -- they are kept in a dark cage under the stove and at most are permitted to walk about the room; even in summer they cannot /190/ go out in the open because of the many dogs, which are used here as draft animals, especially for hauling wood.

122 Unfortunately, here in Ssiktjach, just like the year before in
123 Jenisseisk /Yeniseisk/, we had to undergo the experience that the first entrance into a warm room after a long and difficult journey is not beneficial to one's health. For several days we felt listless and suffered from headaches, and I from a swollen cheek as well, which scarcely made it possible for me to give Mrs. Rjeschétnikow's cooking the attention it deserved.

And yet what great charm lay in this return from the wilderness! Even though Ssiktjách was such a remote outpost of culture and for a civilized European a wretched hole, how many long-missed enjoyments it offered us. Only someone who has been in this position himself can appreciate the pleasure that we felt when for the first time we undressed once again in a warm room, made our toilet at our ease in European fashion, and then put on the clean finer clothing that had been lying unused in our suitcases for almost a year. Perhaps a cadet who puts on the trim officer's uniform for the first time experiences something similar. How I had longed to be able to put my legs under a table again, for eating and writing on one's knees or at best on

53: Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
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(naturally, subordinate in turn to the tsarist administration); those who sat at the head of them, the elders and chief elders, were either toyons in origin, or mere servants who obeyed them implicitly. The clan and nasleg meetings (munnyakh), at which the poor people dared not say a word, played the same part.

Thus, the frequently expressed opinion that the clan structure was retained among the Yakuts right up to the 20th century is a profound error.

Just as erroneous is the opinion of certain ethnographers that there were elements of the matriarchate among the Yakuts. This view is based on the fact that there was a division of the aga-uus (paternal clan) into smaller groups, iye-uuha (literally, "maternal clan"). The latter do indeed figure in the 19th-century official documents under the name of "tribal clans." But, despite the Yakut name, these small groups were not genuine maternal clans; kinship and descent were not reckoned on the female but on the male side. The name "iye-uus" is evidently to be explained by the fact that these subdivisions were descended from one clan progenitor, though from different wives.

More direct, although also more or less modified, survivals of primitive-communal relations were retained by the Yakuts in certain characteristic customs, such as, for example, elements of collectivism in fishing. The Yakuts retained the custom of communal net-fishing in rivers and lakes belonging to individual naslegs and clans. The catch, which was often an extremely abundant one, was divided on the spot among those taking part as well as among the onlookers (though the latter received less, admittedly). In the north there was a similar custom for moulting geese, which were caught by tens of thousands.

The custom of mutual gifts (belekh) was also very archaic. The Yakut would visit a relative or friend, sometimes at a far-away spot, and receive a gift from his host, as though in gratitude for the visit; the gift would be a horse, saddle, a certain amount of meat, and so on, and in return, according to custom, he would invite the giver to visit him, although it might be a long time after, and present him with a gift of approximately the same value. These gifts were often timed to coincide with weddings, though they were sometimes presented independently.

The custom of hospitality was also observed. Hosts had to regale a guest visiting them, even though he might be a complete stranger, with the same food that they ate themselves. Since this custom clashed with the capitalist psychology, reared on commercial relationships, it was regarded in many cases as an inevitable evil which everyone tried to avoid in every way he could; this often resulted in comic episodes in which the hosts (more often than not wealthy people) hastily hid away the food they were about to eat when they saw a guest approaching, while the latter resorted to various tricks in order to find where the food was hidden. According to the old custom, the host was also obliged to invite relatives and neighbors whenever a beast was slaughtered and to offer them meat. Nonobservance of this custom gave rise to public censure.

Apart from these individual customs, the Yakut society admittedly retained the characteristic, half-conscious patriarchal ideology, which was clearly not a reflection of their true relationships, although it served the interests of the toyons, who knew how to make use of it. The toyons liked to style themselves the forefathers, heads and sponsors of their clans; they skillfully fomented various interclan quarrels (usually

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• Dolgan

somewhat to the north of this boundary. The migration from winter to summer camps and back was made in the spring or fall. 221

In winter, the families of Noril'sk and Popigay Dolgans lived apart from one another, often singly. The remainder still continued to nomadize along the northern edge of the forest and formed the chain of "stations" of the winter Noril'sk–Popigay highway; this consisted of groups of 5–10 households, some of the stations comprising groups of permanent dwellings. But since reindeer require frequent change of pasture, the camps of separate families and the entire stations, and the reindeer-herders living in the Russian-type houses as well, had to change their place of residence several times during the course of the winter. 361 221

As spring approached and the camps broke up, the Dolgans formed into nomadic groups. These groups were combined on a territorial basis and were bound by common economic interests. Associations of this kind meant that a smaller number of herdsmen was required for the reindeer since it took fewer people to look after a large herd than several small ones. In the spring, as soon as the grass appeared, and in the summer, during the season of the mosquitoes and other harmful insects, the Dolgans watched their herds the whole day through, appointing sentries from each household in turn. The nomadic Dolgans wandered along lakes, rivers and mountains. In the autumn, when the insects disappeared, each group of nomads divided up once more into separate families, which then nomadized in the region of their polar-fox traps, setting them again for the winter, or else hunted singly for wild reindeer until it was time to go back to the camps. [233]

The reindeer-breeding of the Dolgans combined the traditions of the Tungus breeding for purposes of riding, with devices and techniques borrowed from the herders of the Samoyedic groups. Thus, the Dolgans used reindeer both for riding and carrying (in summer) and at the same time made extensive use of reindeer sled-teams (in winter). But even in the first half of the 19th century the Dolgans in some parts only used their reindeer for riding. The various types of sleds are fundamentally similar to the Nennish and Nganasan types, but they also have the Yakut type with its low, straight staves. The harnessing technique differed from that of the Nentsy; the lead reindeer is harnessed and controlled by the rein on the right, whereas among the Nentsy, Entsy and Nganasans the lead reindeer is harnessed and controlled by the left-hand rein (it should be noted in this connection that the Evenks and Dolgans, even when riding reindeer, mount from the right and also guide it from the right). The system of milking reindeer, typical of the Evenks, was retained by the Dolgans; like the Nentsy and Nganasans they also used herd dogs. The saddles and riding techniques of the Dolgans were of the Tungus type. 233 177 492 [171]

The Dolgans hunted polar fox, wild reindeer and various wildfowl including duck, geese and partridge. Until quite recently they still used bows and arrows for the purpose, obtaining them from the Kets, via the Russians, and also from the Yakuts and southern Evenks. The Dolgans also had self-triggered bows for killing reindeer, which they set up in the forest preserves east of the Khatanga. According to legend, in the remote past the Dolgans used to hunt reindeer with slings and throwing-arrows. 223 [173]

The Dolgans attributed great importance to collective reindeer spearing in the autumn at river crossings, and to various hunting techniques with guns (which replaced the old bow and arrow). In the winter, the animals were hunted by means of specially trained decoy reindeer. In the winter they hunted reindeer with guns and bows and arrows almost entirely by the chasing technique: 4 strong reindeer were harnessed to a light sled and the herd was trailed for hours on end. Another form of winter hunting

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Dolgan

towards the reindeer in complete silence, and in summer they wore a protective gray coat the color of the stony tundra. Both in summer and autumn, until the first snow fell, the Dolgans used to trail wild reindeer with hunting dogs. They used poisoned bullets, and probably poisoned arrows as well in the past. As the poison they used rancid reindeer fat. The Dolgans living in the forest-tundra had wide skis of the Tungus type, but they could not use them in the tundra on account of the drifts.

Hunting wild reindeer was only of importance as a source of meat and skin for the Dolgans' own semisubsistence economy.

For catching geese they set traps or arranged noose-type snares by the nests, and also drove moulting geese into nets set up in advance or harried them with dogs and then killed them with sticks. Ducks were trapped with special nets stretched across lakes. Partridges were also caught this way, though only in winter. Sometimes a live female partridge was tied to the net as bait.

Polar-fox hunting was of quite considerable economic importance and produced the principal commercial yield. The animals were mainly caught with traps and snares. As it seized hold of the bait, the fox pulled away a stick and released a log which fell onto it. The principle of this trap was borrowed from the Russians; up to that time they had only set self-firing bows on stakes driven into the ground to catch the animals.

The commonest type of fishing tackle both in summer and winter under the ice was an upright net 6-30 m long. The nets were made of threads or horsehair brought from Yakutya. In the Noril'sk Rayon the nets were used in the autumn in mountain rivers. The draught animal employed for this purpose was the reindeer and the ropes from the net were attached to its saddle. Other types of nets were used to a very limited degree. Seines were also commonly used for sterlet, burbot, pike and grayling and trout with hooks prefabricated from bent 10-cm nails. Burbot was also caught with special bone points instead of hooks.

For traveling by water, mainly for fishing purposes, there were tree-trunk canoes brought by the merchants from the Yenisey, or bought from the Yakuts. There were few boats; it was only on the rivers Pyasina and Khatanga that they were used.

The Dolgans subsisted mainly on meat and fish. These were boiled or dried and the fish was also eaten in the raw, frozen and unfrozen forms. Fish was also kept in pits where it was pickled. Dead geese were kept buried in the ground. Certain roots were also eaten; they were dug up with reindeer horns or special wooden trowels.

The old type of nomadic dwelling among the Dolgans was the conical Tungus-type tent covered with thin panels of suede (in the summer) and deerhide (in the winter). In the old days the Dolgans, like the Evenks, built huts of the Yakut type, but without the windows, benches and hearth.

With the advent of the Russians the huts were gradually ousted by sled-tents or baloks. These are little huts on runners. The framework consists of wooden struts tightly covered with bright-colored calico, and on top, to keep it warm, there is a layer of deerskin and a canvas cover to guard against damp. In this kind of dwelling there are two windows with glass, an iron stove, bunks, a table, and sometimes even chairs. Whereas the erection of a pole tent required a great deal of labor during the cold winters, this type of tent can simply be pulled along the ground to a new site. These tents were borrowed in the last century from Russian merchants who traveled in them through the tundra.

Among other structures we should point out storehouses standing on high piles for keeping winter clothing and utensils.

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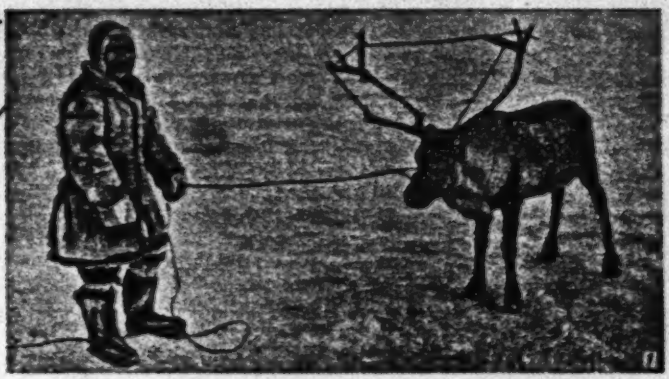

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Hunting:
1—hunter with decoy reindeer; 2—hunting wild reindeer from behind a shield; 3—catching partridge with nets.